Chicago to Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail Planning Study

April 30, 2012

Iowa Department of Transportation
Illinois Department of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration
Iowa Connections Get on Board

Agenda

- Introduction & Study Overview
  - Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT, Office of Rail Transportation
- Draft Alternatives Analysis findings
  - Mark Hemphill, HDR Inc.
- Next Steps
  - Amanda Martin, Iowa DOT, Office of Rail Transportation

What is the study?

- The Iowa Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)and Illinois Department of Transportation, is studying the feasibility of expanding existing passenger rail service and developing a new regional passenger rail service from Chicago, Ill., through Iowa to Omaha, Neb.
- This study will be a major step in assessing the viability of a regional intercity passenger rail system serving Iowa and the Midwest through this corridor.

Purpose of the study

- The purpose of this study is to:
  - Evaluate potential route alternatives.
  - Evaluate levels of service and ridership.
  - Analyze environmental impacts.
  - Determine a preferred Chicago to Omaha passenger rail route alternative for regional intercity passenger rail service.

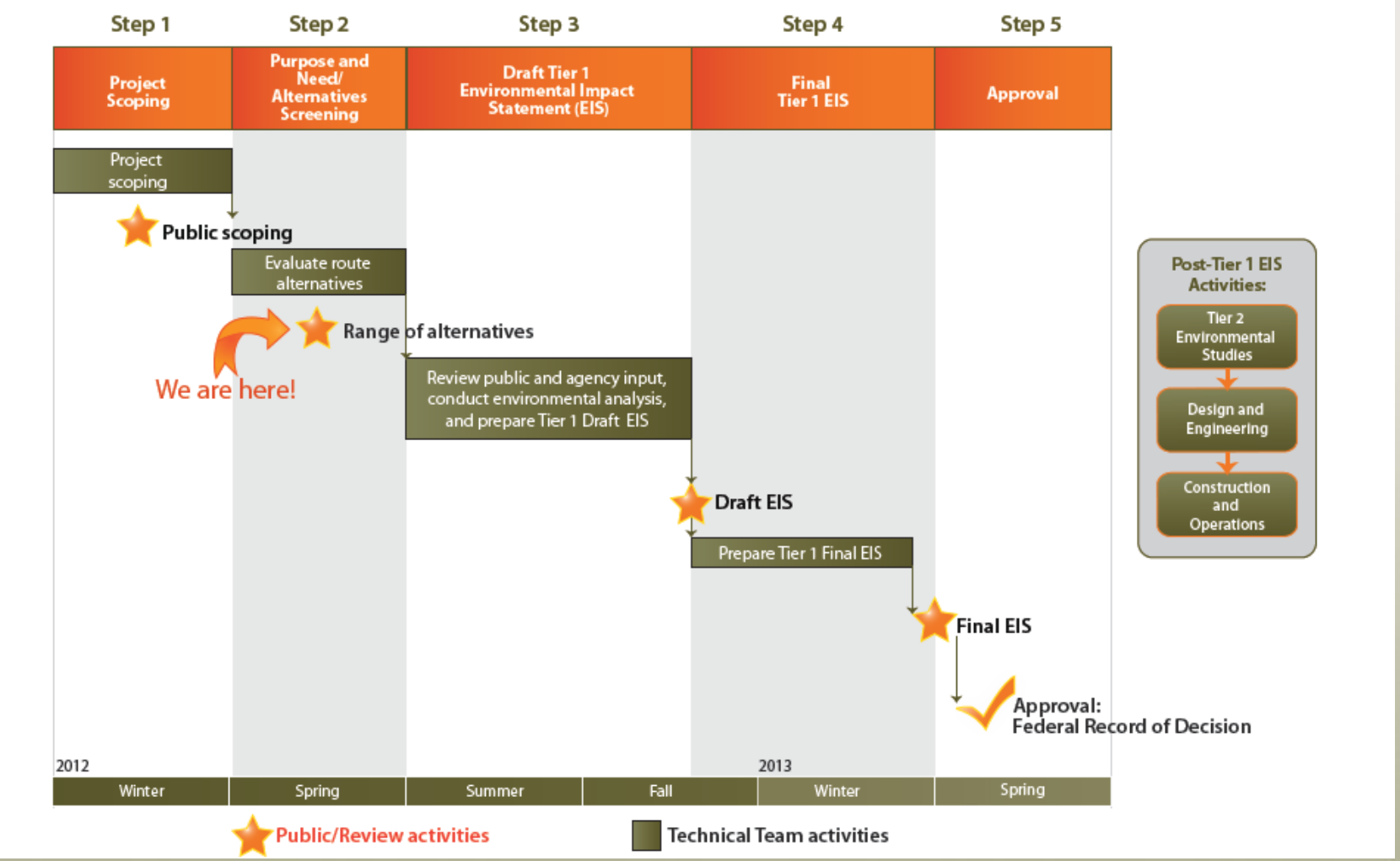
Study costs

- Overall cost of the planning study: $2 million
- Costs are allocated between the State of Iowa and FRA.
- Implementation costs will be identified during the study.

What would regional passenger rail service provide?

- Reduced travel times compared to automobile.
- Scheduled and convenient passenger rail service.
- Reduced cost compared to air and automobile.
- Improved travel reliability, particularly in inclement weather versus other travel modes.
- Improved passenger ride quality and comfort.
- Reduced use of highways and airports.

Schedule



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Why is this planning process necessary?

- This process is required by federal law if any federal funds are used to implement passenger rail between Chicago and Omaha.
- The railroad companies whose tracks might host the service require assurance that their freight shippers will not be harmed.
- The communities the passenger trains might pass through need to understand how the service might affect them.
- The state needs to understand the full lifetime cost of the service.

Public involvement to-date

Tool	Impact
Website Visits	5,351 unique visitors
Online Meeting Visits	3,799 unique visitors
Mailing List Requests	*586*
Comments	*1,275*
Facebook	*442 shares, 441 liked/shared/commented*
Twitter	*117 tweets/ 40 retweet, 126,900 impressions*

Route alternatives analysis

- Process is defined by the National Environmental Policy Act
- Goal of Process
  - Identify “reasonable and feasible” routes
  - Eliminate “unreasonable and infeasible” routes
- Routes deemed reasonable and feasible are evaluated in detail in Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

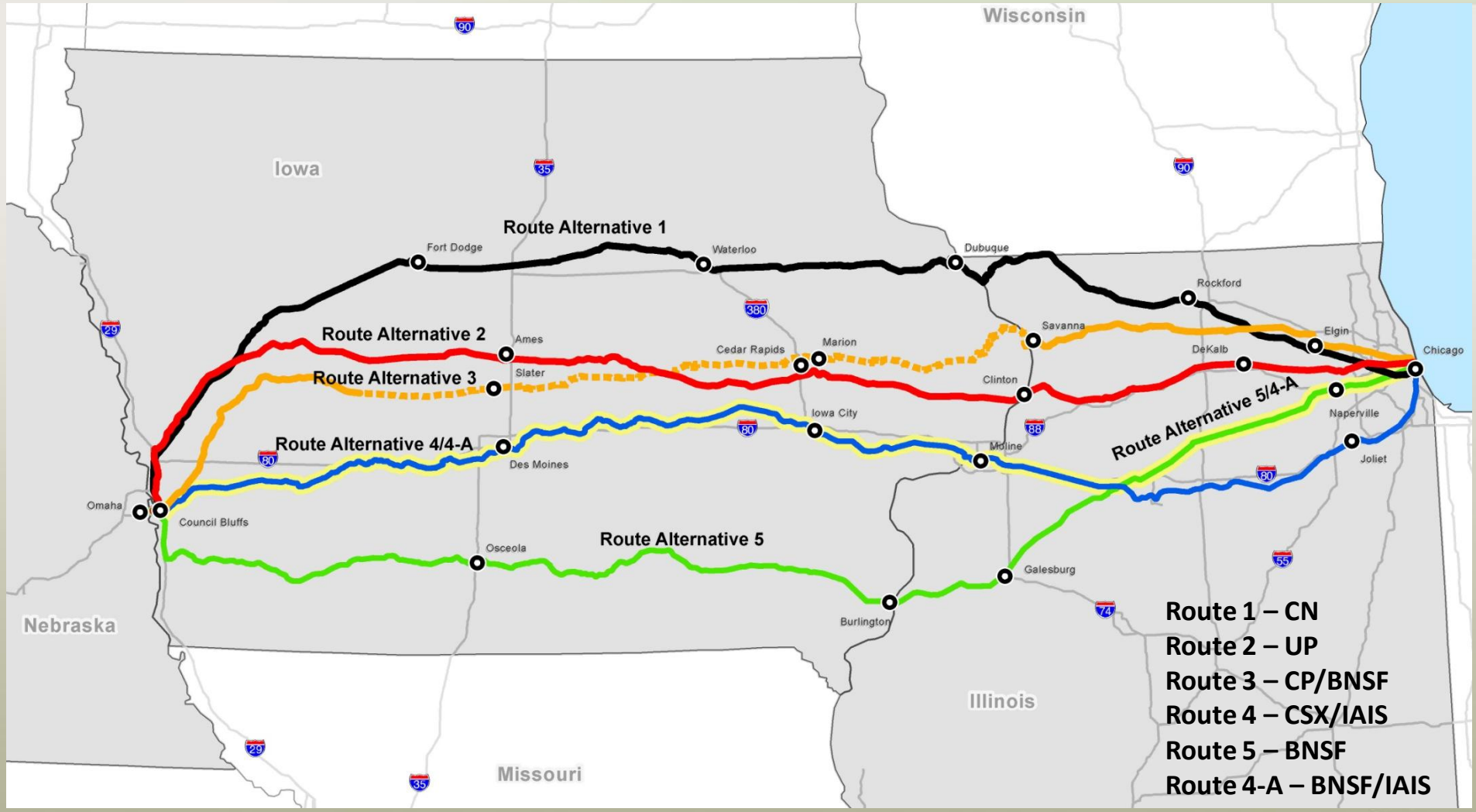
What is “reasonable and feasible?”

- The route must be able to deliver a passenger rail service that meets the Purpose and Need:
  - Competitive and attractive to travelers:
    - Convenient travel times
    - Sufficient frequency of service
    - Serves high population
    - High Reliability
    - High revenue (ticket sales)
  - Technically and economically feasible
    - Lowest reasonable capital, operating and maintenance costs
  - Environmentally feasible
    - Environmental impacts minimized

Initial route identification

- Six existing routes between Chicago and Omaha were analyzed:
  - Five are intact
  - One is partially abandoned
  - All previously hosted passenger trains at speeds of up to about 110 mph
- No “greenfield” routes were analyzed
  - Greenfield routes needed for speeds higher than 110 mph, but
  - Speeds higher than 110 mph are not required
  - Greenfield routes are very high cost

Chicago-Omaha route alternatives



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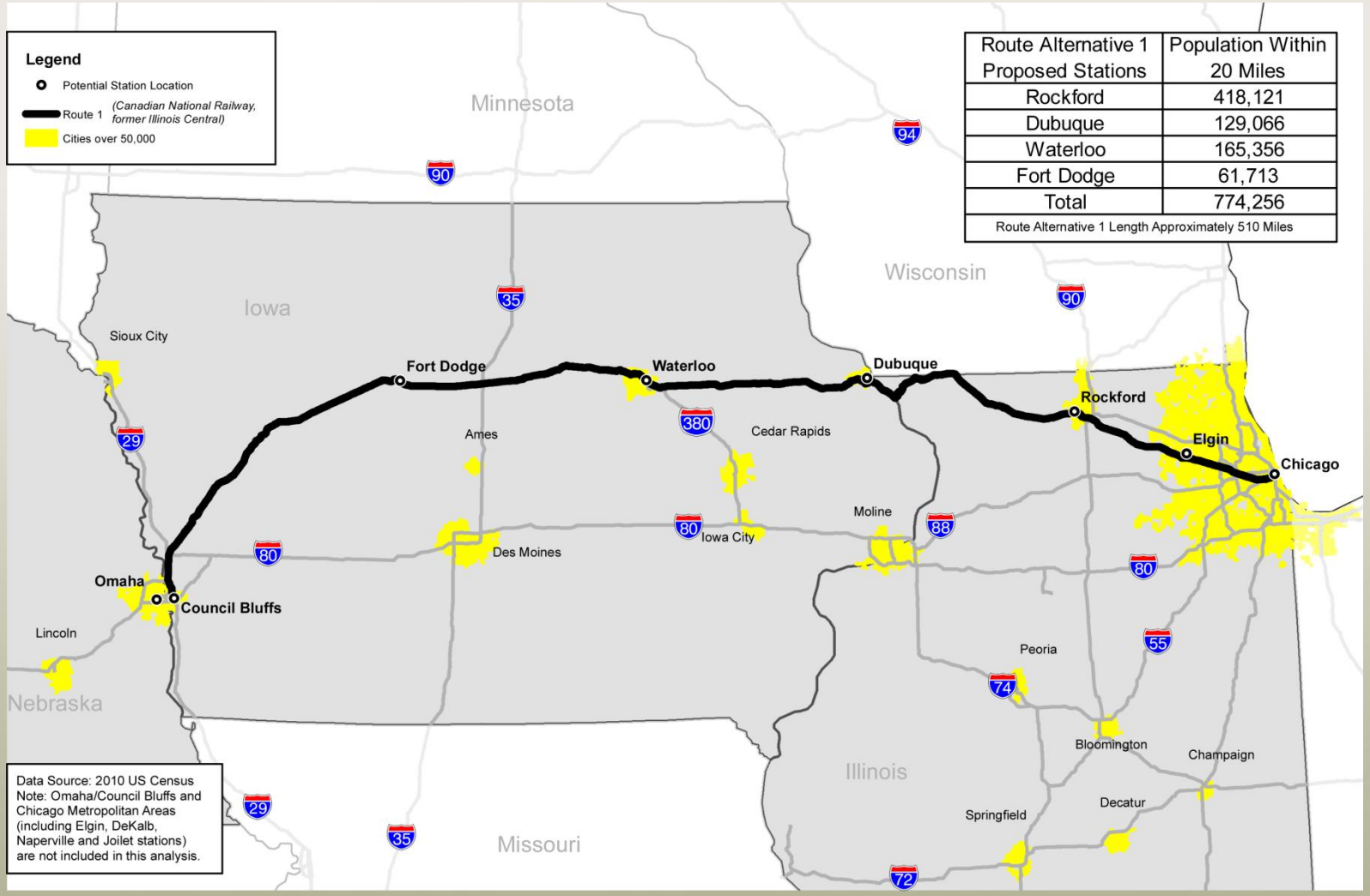
Alternatives analysis - general approach

Category	Coarse-level Criteria	Fine-level Criteria	
Purpose and Need	• Population proximity • Competitive and attractive modes of travel	• Ridership and revenue • Cost • Available alternative services • Travel times	
Environmental Concerns	• Major challenges • Sensitive area impacts • Right-of-way impacts	• Streams • Wetlands • Farmlands • Threatened and endangered species • Cultural resources	• Potential Section 4(f)/6(f) protected properties • Environmental justice • Noise and vibration • Hazardous materials • Right-of-way Impacts
Technical Feasibility	• Major construction efforts • Freight train traffic conflicts	• Freight train traffic conflicts	
Technical/Economic Feasibility	• N/A	• Alignment • Structures • Grade crossings	
Economic Feasibility	• Cost of Implementation	• High-level Project Costs	

Route evaluation process

- Steps in Evaluation:
  - Travel time estimate
  - Ridership/revenue forecast
  - Train capacity (track, signal, bridges for existing and future freight + passenger)
  - Infrastructure needs assessment
  - Infrastructure cost estimate
  - Equipment and operating and maintenance cost estimate
  - Environmental impacts assessment
- Result – routes are summarized to screen for whether they are reasonable and feasible

Route 1 – CN
Annual Ridership 505,000-715,000



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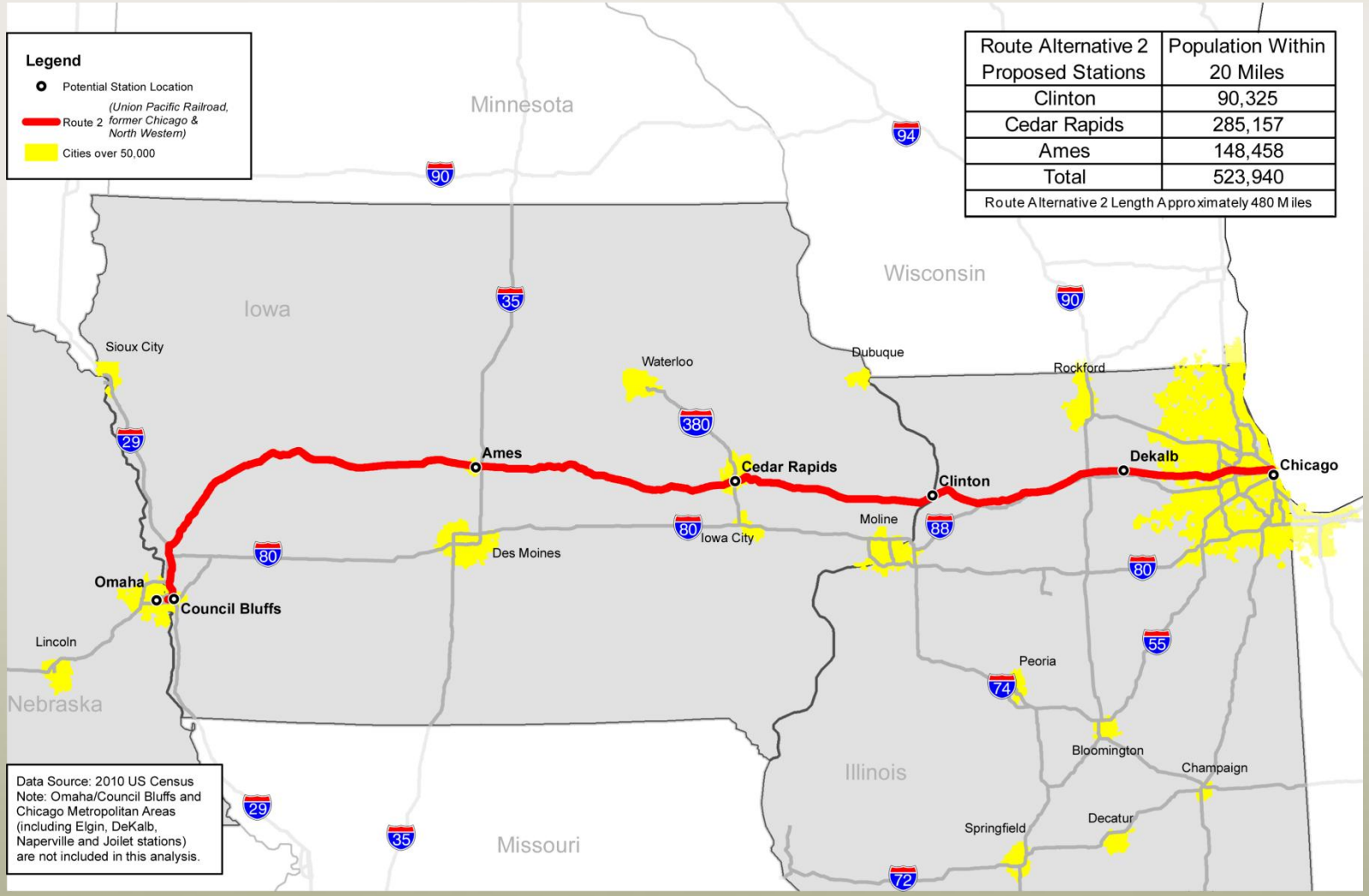
Route 2 – UP
Annual Ridership 375,000-550,000



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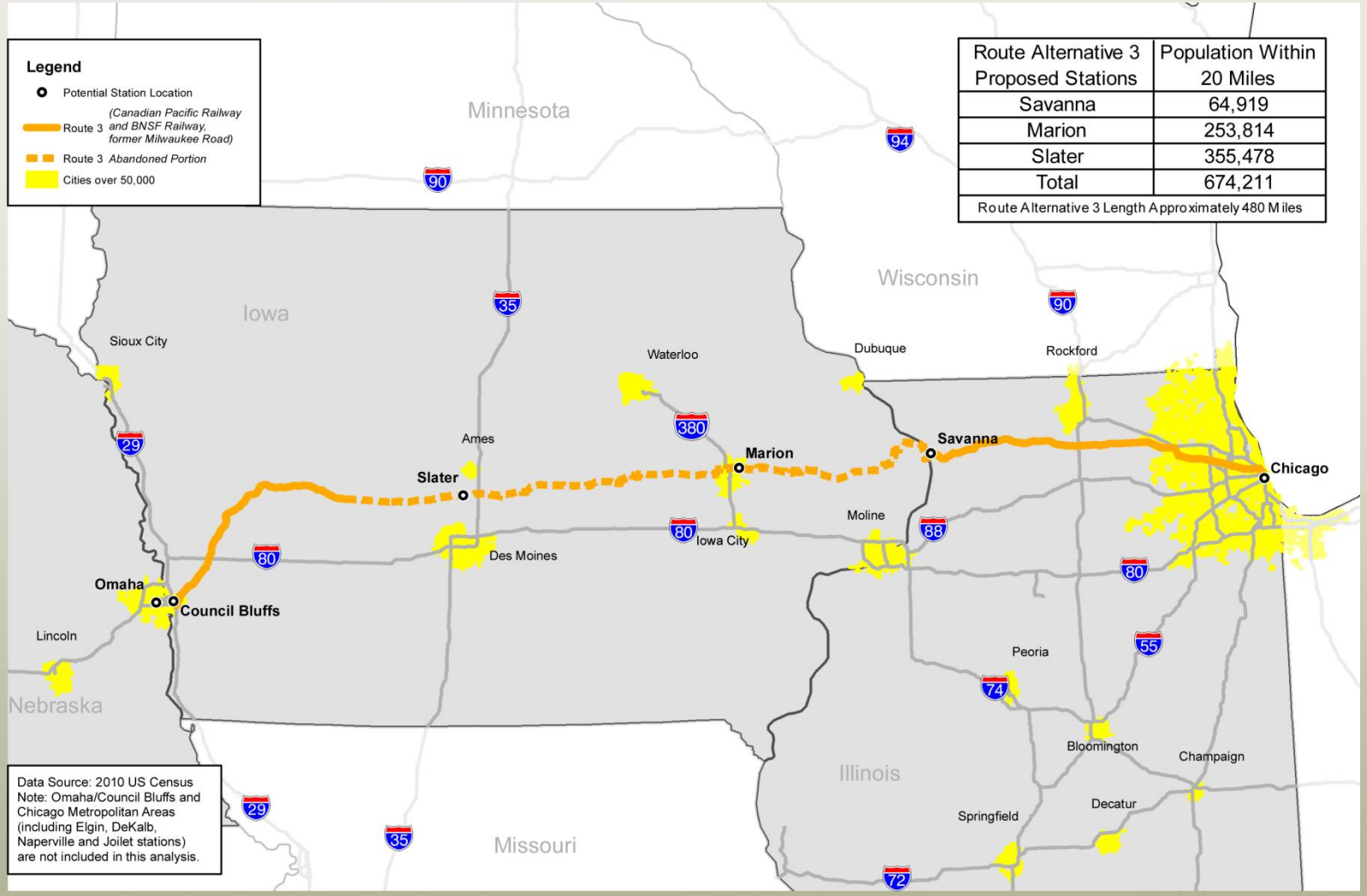
Route 3 – CP/BNSF (Route screened out)



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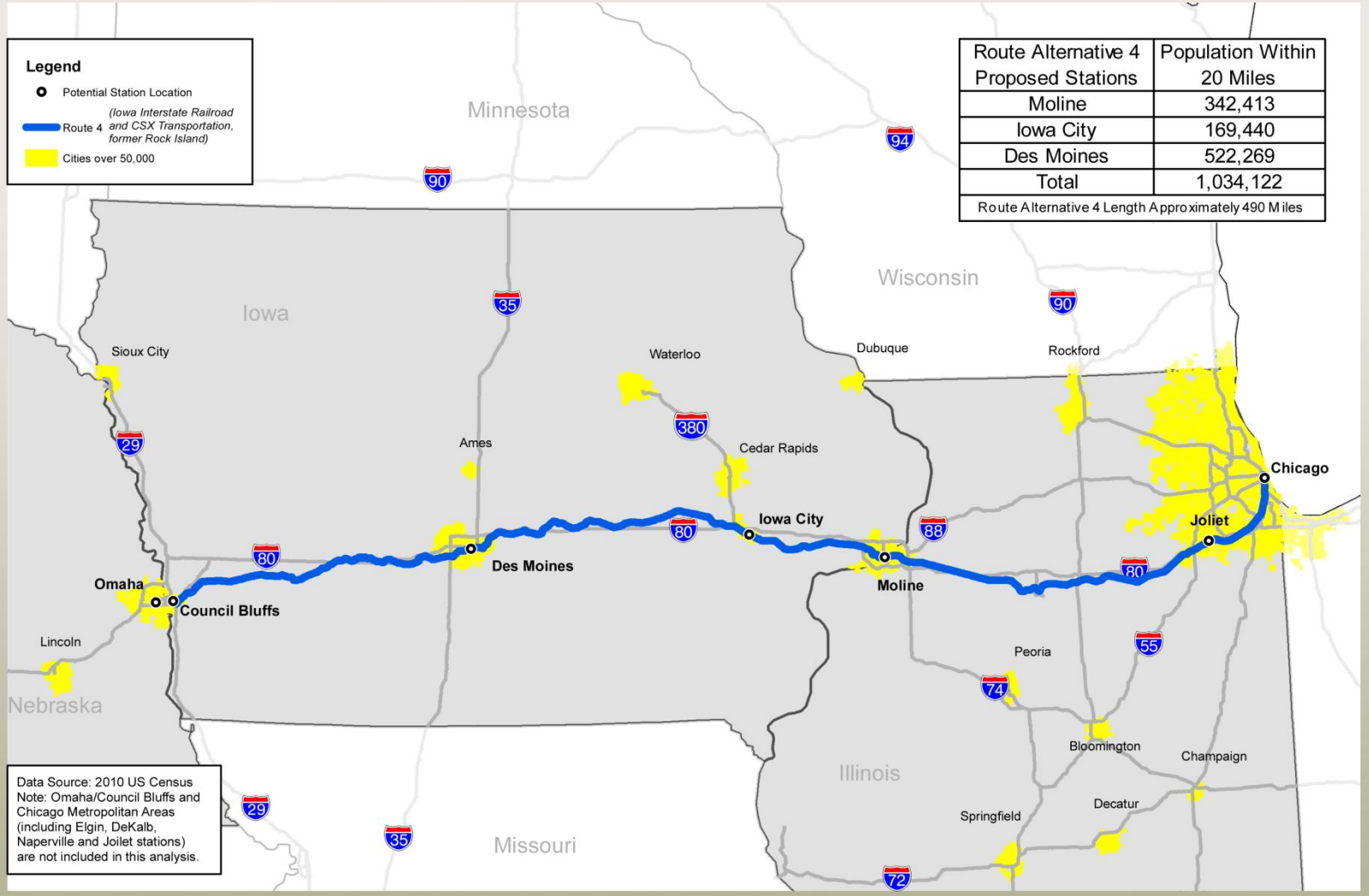
Route 4 – CSX/IAIS
Annual Ridership 640,000-885,000



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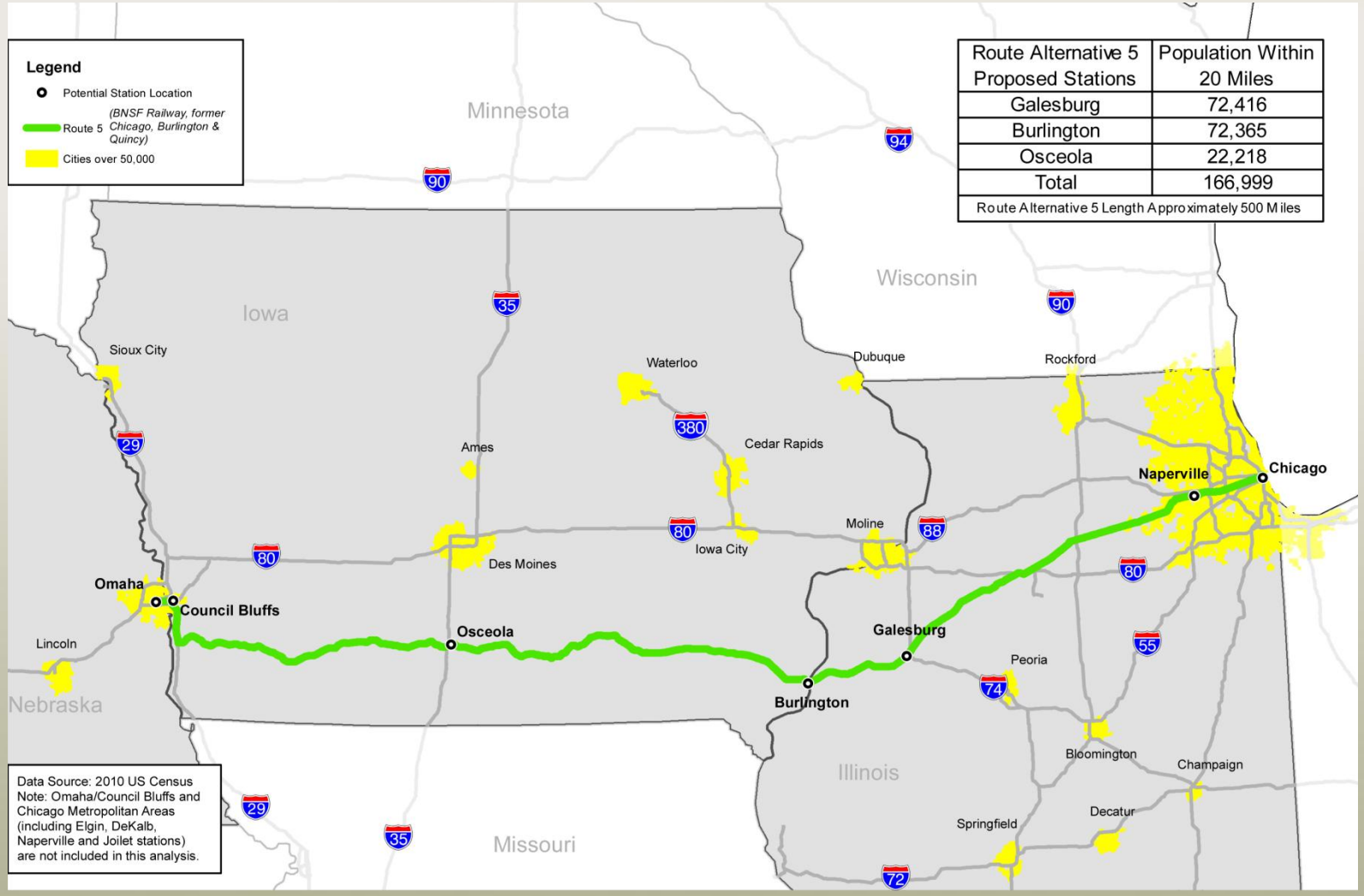
Route 5 – BNSF
Annual Ridership 255,000-370,000



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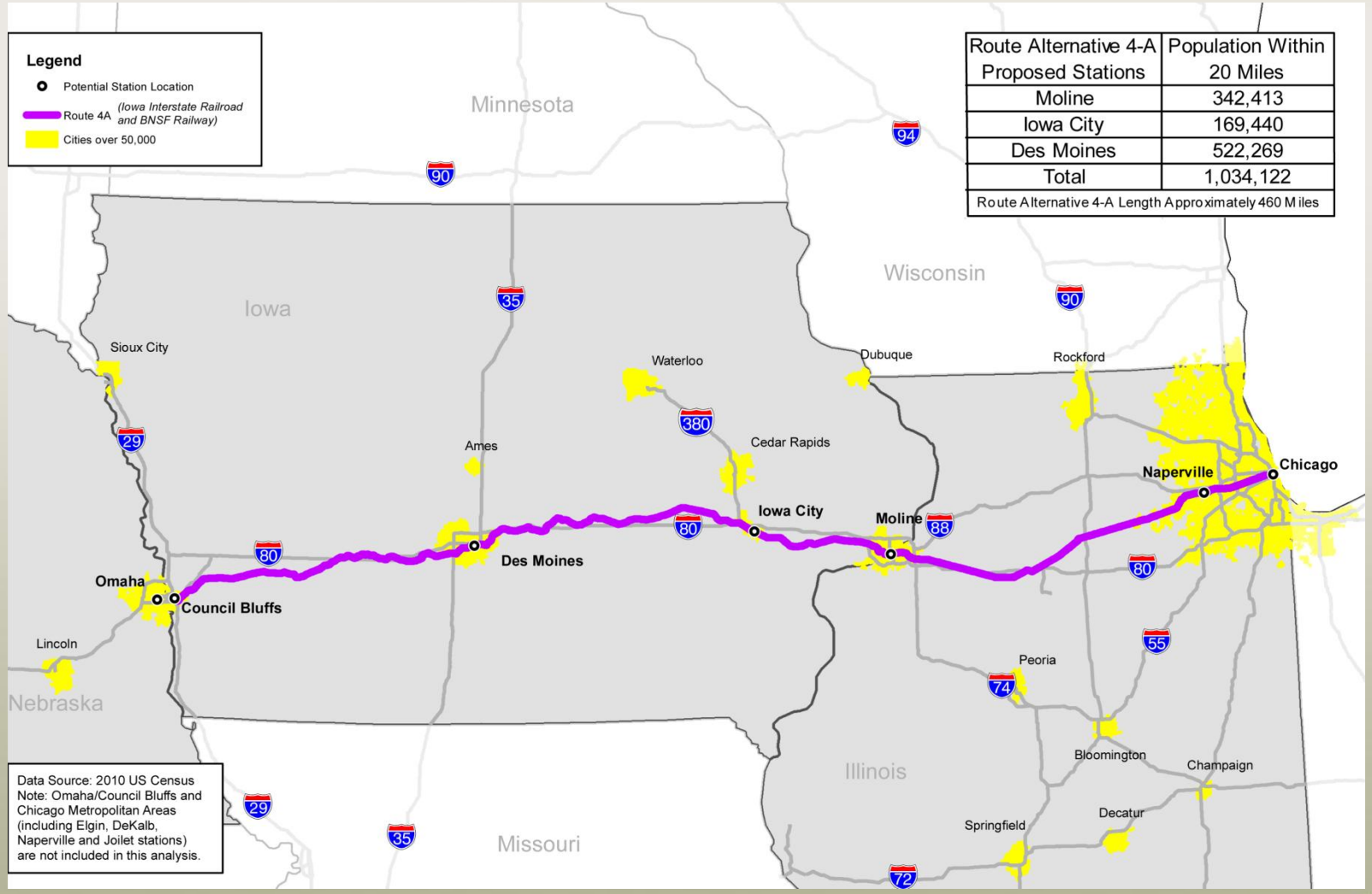
Route 4-A – BNSF/IAIS
Annual Ridership 680,000-935,000



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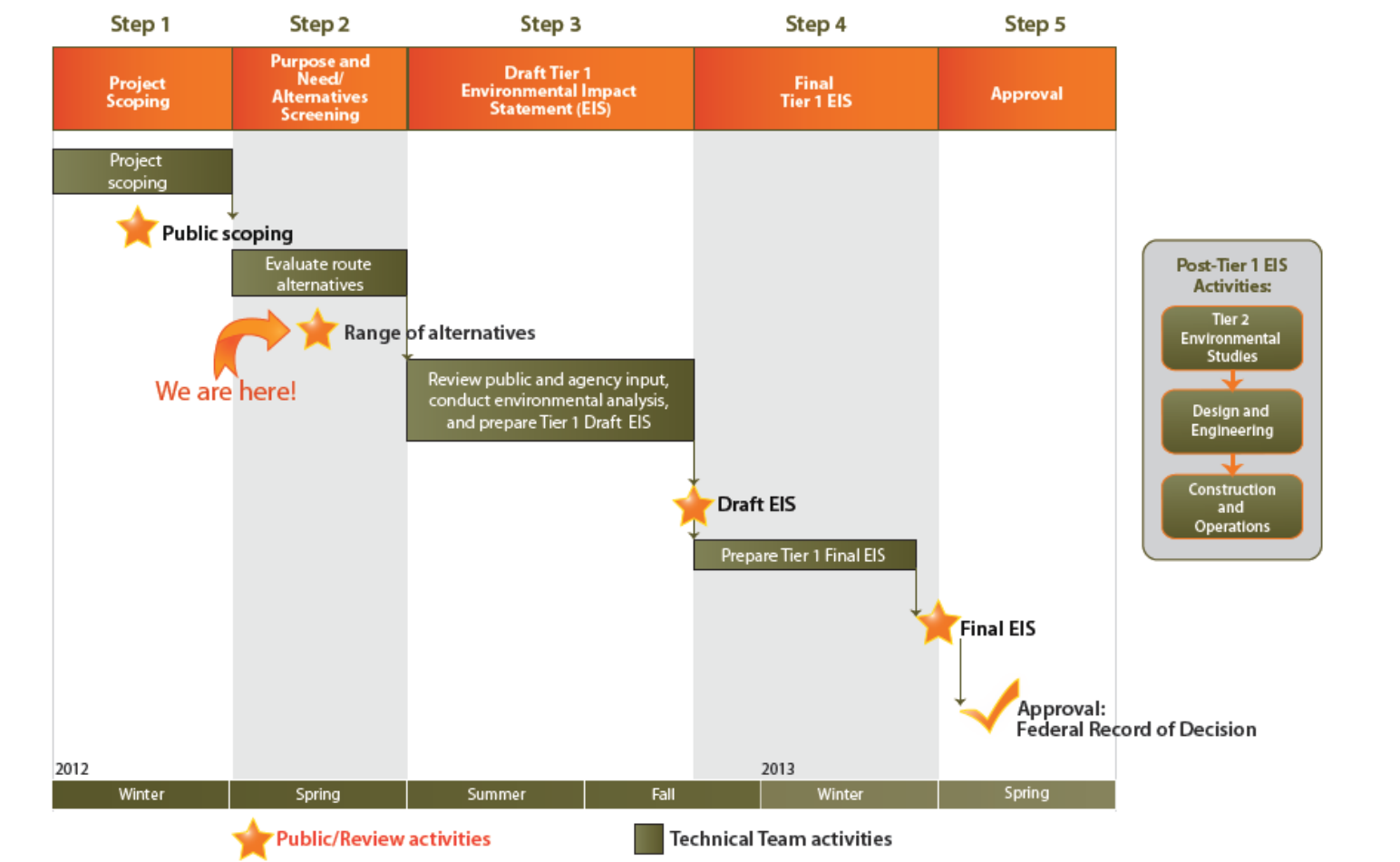
Draft findings

- Route Alternative 1 – CN – will not be carried forward to EIS
  - Insufficient ridership and revenue through ticket sales
  - Travel time not competitive with auto or bus
  - High implementation cost
- Route Alternative 2 – UP – will not be carried forward to EIS
  - Insufficient ridership and revenue through ticket sales
  - Very high implementation cost
- Route Alternative 3 – CP/BNSF – eliminated at rough-screening level
  - High right-of-way acquisition cost
  - High environmental impacts
- Route Alternative 4 – IAIS – will not be carried forward to EIS
  - Does not serve Chicago Union Station
  - Connection to CUS not feasible
- Route Alternative 5 – BNSF – will not be carried forward to EIS
  - Insufficient ridership and revenue through ticket sales
  - Very high implementation cost
- Route Alternative 4-A – IAIS/BNSF – will be carried forward to EIS
  - Highest ridership and revenue through ticket sales
  - Almost the fastest
  - Almost the least expensive
  - No-build alternative – will be carried forward to EIS to serve as a baseline and meet NEPA requirements of evaluating impacts of no action

Next steps for preferred route

- Assessment of existing conditions
  - Detailed evaluation of existing infrastructure and freight traffic
  - Station location analysis
  - Station connectivity analysis
- Conceptual engineering
  - Cost estimate
  - Determine environmental footprint
- Environmental evaluation
  - Tier 1 level analysis only
  - Chicago, Omaha, and final station locations will be addressed during Tier 2
- Service development planning
  - Initial operations planning
  - Initial stations planning

Study next steps



Public contact information

- Online meeting, website, and the community toolkit at **www.iowadot.gov/chicagotoomaha**
- In-person meetings
- Hotline at 1-800-488-7119
- E-mail at email@chicagotoomaha.com
- Send mail to:

  Iowa Department of Transportation

  Attn: Tamara Nicholson

  800 Lincoln Way

  Ames, Iowa 50010